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ABSTRACT

These critiques of a high school American government textbook, "American Government in Action," (Resnik and Nerenberg, 1973) represent the first in a series of studies designed to assess the effectiveness of social science textbooks in communicating and reinforcing Western values. The critiques are followed by a response by the authors of the textbook. Three concerned critics with political ideas and public policy, but not connected with secondary education, reviewed and evaluated the text. The three critics agreed that although the text is thorough, clear, and simple, it is overly optimistic and it treats government uncritically. The chapter on crime is criticized either for painting too rosy a picture or for its discussion of "white collar" crime, for example, public utility price fixing. One critic states that the text is dull, intellectually sloppy, and fails to communicate the basic values of Western civilization. A second critic notes that the book reinforces a general faith in the responsiveness of government and shows sensitivity to the delicateness of public choices. The authors of the criticized American government textbook respond that the critics should have been aware of the audience to whom the book was addressed. They note that students must be provided with readable and understandable concepts, that publishers must adhere to a middle of the road position, and that the book must be approved by textbook selection committees and by school boards. The authors believe that the wide sale of their text indicates that it is adaptable to all of these requirements. (KC)

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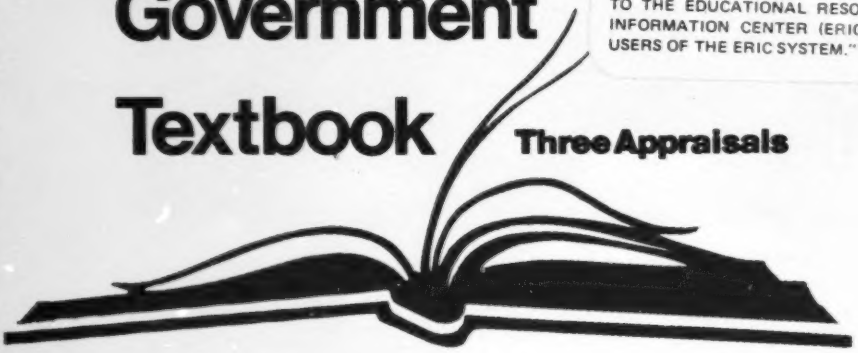
Values in an American Government Textbook

Three Appraisals



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This monograph is one of a series of original studies published by the Ethics and Public Policy Center of Georgetown University. The Center also publishes reprints of articles on domestic and foreign policy. In both series, which are intended for a wide audience, the authors combine moral reasoning with empirical analysis in addressing a variety of public policy issues. The authors alone are responsible for the views expressed.

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Introduction / Textbooks, Values, and American Democracy

In the past few years, surveys and studies have repeatedly documented the functional illiteracy of a substantial minority of American high school students. They have also shown that high school seniors on the threshold of becoming voting citizens are seriously deficient in their knowledge of the structure and processes of American government. These studies did not reveal how much our teenagers know about the subtler and deeper meaning of the American democratic experience, symbolized by the Federalist Papers, the Bill of Rights, *Marbury* v. *Madison*, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, and Harry Truman's 1947 speech calling for U.S. military aid to countries threatened by the Soviet Union.

But we can assume that American young people are less prepared to understand the opportunities and to undertake the obligations of citizenship in a free society than they should be. This inadequate preparation for political participation has been variously attributed to a breakdown of discipline in home or school, growing affluence and leisure time, and, of course, the attraction of television, which seems to offer so much but requires so little of the viewer.

There is little doubt that the vivid and dramatic vicarious experience provided by television has had a profound effect on the younger generation. It has cut deeply into the hours which earlier were available for school homework. The tube, however, is not always an escape from reality or responsibility. In some cases it has informed and even stimulated cultural and intellectual pursuits, but neither network nor local television in America has been a reliable or steady source of citizenship education.

While the effects of television and the other influences that bear on developing political awareness and behavior, though indeterminate, are considerable, it is probably true that the schools remain the chief instrument for teaching the fundamentals of American democracy. And

the textbooks in American history and government, in the hands of a competent teacher, are probably the chief vehicle for passing on our cultural and political heritage to a new generation. Only systematic classroom instruction can shape the haphazard and episodic reporting and comment of television and the press into a larger, more coherent picture and subject it to critical examination.

Thus, the textbook assumes a central—or potentially central—function in informing young citizens. A good textbook must provide facts about events, institutions, and problems as well as competing interpretations of them. It must also appeal to pupils of various backgrounds and levels of interest. Fundamentally, it must affirm traditional Western values and ideals. This is a tall order, especially in view of conflicting demands by parents, teachers, the educational bureaucracy, and other pressure groups, as well as changing pedagogical fads and declining reading ability among students. Only those authors who can pick their way through this ill-marked minefield emerge with successful—that is, widely adopted—books.

Because of their influence, social science textbooks in a democracy are and should be controversial. They will cease to be so only when our free institutions are no longer free. There is perhaps only one way for textbook writers to avoid the slings and arrows of outraged teachers, parents, and scholars—to serve up a bland and balanced diet of contested views which may beguile potential critics but is certain to bewilder pupils. Indeed, authors are often criticized for pussyfooting, lack of commitment, dullness, or banality. Any writer who makes a conscientious effort to distill the essence of American history or government for the citizens of tomorrow must be prepared for a less serene fate.

Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, coauthor of *History of a Free People*, a highly successful secondary school textbook, refers to himself as a "latter-day Saint Sebastian, filled like a pincushion with barbed arrows from all directions." He says he has been "attacked from the right for alleged lack of patriotism, for being soft on Communism" and "from the left as a stooge of capitalism, a reactionary."

It is in the interpretation of controversial issues, past and present, where the most difficult problems lie. Nearly all textbooks today strive to give the appearance of evenhandness and balance; their writers observe the rules of an unwritten "fairness doctrine." Yet despite the fashionable premium on objectivity, every social science textbook is

and must be value-laden. The vaunted goal of a value-free social science is both an impossible dream and an irresponsible illusion.

In the name of presenting a full and fair picture of American diversity, the authors and publishers of textbooks, especially since the early 1960s, have tried to satisfy everyone, which all too often means everyone who makes a fuss about a particular cause or group he believes has been neglected or distorted in the past. A score of ethnic groups and representatives of various organizations have scrutinized school books to see whether their particular concerns were adequately represented, but many groups with similar claims to misrepresentation in the past are not organized or offiically approved, so their views are scarcely heeded. The articulate groups often take their cases to local and state school boards in the attempt to alter curricula or influence textbook selection. Given our long tradition of local control, these pressures are as American as the hallowed one-room school.

The present study is the first in a series to be published by the Ethics and Public Policy Center of Georgetown University. In its continuing school project, the Center seeks to assess *how well widely used social science textbooks transmit the core values of our American heritage without short-changing American pluralism.* The Center affirms the moral validity and political relevance of the great Western ethical imperatives, such as respect for the human person, individual freedom, social justice, religious tolerance, respect for private property, the rule of law, and limited government. These values, enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, should be taught without apology as the essential foundation for a free and democratic society. At the same time, students should be made aware of counter-values and ideologies which seek to replace the democratic world view.

In this first study, we decided to evaluate a high school textbook in American government from among the many in current use. For this task, we solicited the views of three persons concerned with political ideas and deeply involved in public policy issues but having no professional connection to secondary education. The book selected, *American Government in Action*, by Miriam Roher Resnik and Lillian Herlich Nerenberg, was published by Charles E. Merrill in 1973 and is still selling at the rate of several thousand copies a year, though an updated edition is planned for 1979. Along with other basic textbooks in American government, it trails the two current front-runners, *Magruder's American Government*, published by Allyn and Bacon, and

American Political Behavior, by Howard Mehlinger and John J. Patrick, published by Ginn & Company.

The three critics come to their task from different professions, family backgrounds, and political experience. Michael Novak is Ledden-Watson Professor of Religious Studies at Syracuse University, a syndicated columnist, and author of *Politics: Realism and Imagination* and *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics.*

Jeane Kirkpatrick is Resident Scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, on leave from the Department of Government, Georgetown University, and author of *Political Woman* and *The New Presidential Elite.*

Anne Crutcher, a versatile journalist, writes editorials and features on politics, the arts, and food for the *Washington Star.* Earlier, she edited a weekly newspaper in Arlington, Virginia.

The theologian, the political scientist, and the journalist were each asked to write a critical review of selected sections of the Resnick and Nerenberg text and to assess as objectively as possible how well the text communicates and reinforces such Western concepts and values as limited government, impartial justice, individual rights, reward for merit and accomplishment, respect for private property, and the market economy.

Each critic was given the textbook and was encouraged to browse widely through it but was asked to cover thoroughly the following six chapters: 1. Why Government? 5. Our Liberties and Our Rights; 16. Trial, Punishment, and Individual Rights; 18. Government, Business, and You; 19. Government and the Basic Economy; and 20. Government and Your Job.

Each wrote without consulting the others. When the three essays were in hand, we sent a set to each of the two coauthors of the textbook and invited their rebuttal. Their response, which appears after the three critiques, was shown to each of the three critics, and each decided not to alter what he or she had written.

The sharp response of the authors came as something of a surprise to the critics, none of whom was accustomed to being called conservative or right-wing. As a matter of fact, all five participants in this effort come from the same general liberal, democratic background, yet they disagree fundamentally on key issues and perceptions.

The dialogue between the authors of the textbook and their critics turned out to be a microcosm of the larger debate within the entire

democratic world on the relation of individual citizens and society as a whole to government and the multiple roles of the political system in the lives of people. The authors and the critics divide over the central issues in the contemporary debate on the proper role of democratic government in a technically complex and socially pluralistic society.

The book and the response of the authors make it clear that Resnick and Nerenberg are authentic voices for American liberalism as it was expresesd in the 1940s and 1950s. In contrast, the three critics have been active participants in the self-critical reappraisal of liberal ideas and policies that has been going on in the intellectual community and among policy makers, especially since the early 1960s. While there are substantial areas of agreement, it can be said fairly that the critics represent a kind of chastened liberalism, profoundly skeptical of the capacity of big government to solve the wide range of social, economic, and indeed human problems that have been thrust upon it with increasing insistence since the New Deal of President Franklin Roosevelt. The authors have a stronger faith in the efficacy of government. The two schools, if we may call them that, also differ on the causes of and cures of crime and on many other disputed issues.

Our objective in publishing the monograph is to stimulate thoughtful discourse among authors, teachers, and parents about the content of textbooks in American government, with the hope that this will make a modest contribution to better instruction, better citizens, and a stronger American democracy.

ERNEST W. LEFEVER, *Director*
Ethics and Public Policy Center

Washington, D.C.
March 1978

American Government Glamorized

Michael Novak

IT WOULD BE IDLE TO LIST the good qualities of *American Government in Action*. It is well designed, clearly written, and overlaid with a tone of liberal objectivity—apparently many-sided, reasoned, and committed to individual rational choice. Moreover, it would be ungallant to fault a high school course book for seeming to give too rosy a picture of the way government works. A certain trace of idealism is probably to be desired.

Yet the precise fault of this text goes far beyond simple idealism: The authors uncritically and thoroughly embrace the cause of big government. They are quite secure in their commitment to government. They argue consistently that their own commitment is justified, while treating opposing views as quaintly out of date. In this sense, their book is regrettably complacent and conservative. It gives full blessing to one trend in political philosophy, raising few of the difficulties implicit in that trend.

The book glamorizes government in two ways. The title suggests one way, about which the preface is quite explicit: "To transform inattention into real interest and boredom into excitement has been the primary aim of the authors of this book" (p.v). Further, the authors continually try to make the cause of big government, the growth of government, and the extension of government into new areas seem exciting, creative, and progressive.

About government, the authors are determinedly optimistic. Seldom do they warn of the clumsiness, inefficiency, tyranny, arrogance, or danger to liberal values of government. They seem to assume that big government, almost by definition, is liberal. Their version of history is a tale of successful, liberating, and helpful extensions of government into daily life. The centerpiece of each chapter is not only the fact that government does influence daily life in each succeeding new area, but also the belief that the extension of governmental power into each

new area is on the whole to be expected, on the whole healthy, and on the whole an extension of the power of the people. Cutely, they write many such sentences: "And yet, like all human enterprises, the [court] system is not perfect, though many thoughtful Americans believe it is certainly perfectible" (p. 337).

The basic technique of the authors is to raise controversial questions by saying, "Some people believe . . ." then countering with, "Other people believe . . ." In general, it is a fair index of the authors' own underlying argument to study the last assertion in these chains of argument. Almost invariably, the final opinion is stated most cogently and with the most conviction. It remains in the reader's mind long after the more weakly put preceding objections have canceled each other out. These concluding opinions are blessings on the cause of bigger (and more "liberal") government. The authors plainly want students to treat government as "where the action is" and to join that action. The authors, they themselves say, "have emphasized the basic concept that government is *for, by,* and *of* the people" (p. v). To which a critic will want to reply, "It *should* be. But what if it isn't?" What if *the people* are *for, by,* and *of* the government? The threat from big government—a threat not to conservative but to liberal values—does not seriously concern the authors.

It is worth clarifying this issue, even to the point of tedium. The authors seem to imagine that all criticism of big government must come from the conservative camp. They seldom, if ever, raise criticisms of big government from a liberal direction. (An exception here is their predictable treatment of civil rights issues.) That there are many liberals highly skeptical about big government—one might mention Governor Jerry Brown of their own state of California—is not a theme of this book.

Chapter 1, "Why Government?" might have had a very different point to make if the authors had taken their own question expressed in the chapter title, seriously enough. They begin with an anecdote from William Golding's *Lord of the Flies,* an account of the way in which a group of schoolboys marooned on an island choose a leader and set up the rudiments of a government. They then assert that "early man probably formed bands and tribes in much the same fashion. Government today is really no different; it still consists of sets of institutions which make decisions that are binding on all" (p. 3). Far from raising the question of tyranny and oppression, however, the

authors picture government as the benign bearer of gifts: "Government is the means men and women have used from time immemorial to achieve benefits which they could not realize alone" (p. 3). Skipping ahead, they conclude: "Eventually, they expected government to provide insurance against joblessness, flights into the stratosphere, and even opera houses" (p. 4). People want. People need. Government satisfies. Can needs not be satisfied apart from government? Have they been? Should distinctions be made between *which* needs government might satisfy? Are there no limits to the necessity of government? Are there no dangers in government? The opening two pages are not auspicious.

In the following pages, concerned with "Kinds of Government," the authors fudge two basic distinctions. They fail to distinguish between *autocracy, dictatorship,* and *oligarchy* on the one hand and *totalitarian* government on the other. They explicitly state that autocracy, dictatorship, and oligarchy "are all terms for totalitarian forms of government." But totalitarianism is a twentieth-century phenomenon of a particular technological form. A twentieth-century autocracy may or may not be totalitarian. To miss this distinction is to set the stage for two misunderstandings, one about the nature of legitimate alternatives to democracy and the other about the nature of the totalitarian threat to democracy. (Their treatment of monarchy, too, is slipshod.) In addition, the authors might have noted that autocratic governments—in India, Greece, Spain, and Portugal, for example—sometimes become democratic but that there is no known instance of a Communist totalitarian state becoming democratic. One might consider this an important difference.

The second basic distinction they fudge, then, concerns the notions of *republic* and *democracy*. Here is what they write:

> The United States is a *republic:* all power belongs to the people, who elect representatives to operate their government for them. The United States is also a *democracy:* all people are considered *equal;* they all have an equal voice in making governmental decisions, which they do either personally or through elected representatives (p. 8).

The treatment the authors here give the word *equal* is misleading. They might more simply have spoken of "equal rights under the law," and "the rights of individuals." To say that people have equal voice is just plain wrong, in fact as well, perhaps, as in conception. Wealth, even in a democracy, has a "voice" different from that of poverty,

intelligence difference from that of ignorance, organization different from that of disorganization, and so on. Democracy promises equal access or opportunity in certain limited respects. Whether it promises equal results is another question. One wishes to grant the authors the right to speak simply and with brevity. Pages 5–8 could have been far sharper and deeper and these criteria could still have been met.

"How much government is really necessary? Should government do more or should it be whittled down? . . . Are we getting what we want from government? Is the price—not only in terms of money but also in terms of individual liberty—too high? Will government listen to us when we speak?" (p. 8). The authors raise these questions pro forma. They never really carry through the argument that answers them in a way that is less than flattering to democratic government.

Section 3 of Chapter 1 is entitled "The American Government's Customers," as though the government were a large merchandising establishment and citizens its customers. (Not its owners? Not its shareholders? Not those with responsibility for productivity and profits, rather than those seeking consumption and the fulfillment of wants?) They argue that "mobility, automation, and scientific achievement have brought about . . . new intertwined governmental problems" (p. 11). The rationalization for big government is here established. Bigness and complexity need governmental interventions. Is that really so? Is it dangerous? Are there no alternatives?

"Solving America's Problems" is the title for Section 4 of the first chapter.

> Solving the problems we have mentioned and all the other problems to which we will allude in the course of this book affects every American. To help devise solutions is, directly or indirectly, every American's responsibility. To discharge such a responsibility each of us must know something about his government and how it operates (p. 13).

It may be, however, that turning to government is part of the problem, not part of the solution. It may be that "problems" have no "solutions." I especially liked this fragment of a sentence: "In subsequent chapters, we will find out . . . what jobs government is doing for us, and how we can make our needs known and try to see that they are met" (p. 15). The image of government as the provider, as the caretaker for our needs, and (later) as the biggest and best game in town, is overpowering. The suggestion that this image is not only an illusion, but a destructive illusion, is not entertained.

When we turn ahead to Chapter 5, "Our Liberties and Our Rights," the picture does not improve. This chapter is an unvarnished presentation of an un-self-critical liberal's view of the subject. Things go wrong even in the photographs chosen for illustration: A saintly, radiant, smiling Daniel Ellsberg is given a half page (p. 83), like another Charles Lindbergh in the history books. (The caption, too, is misleading. It says, "Ellsberg released the 'Pentagon Papers'—supposedly secret documents on U.S. involvement in Vietnam—to the New York Times." The fact is that he made public many top secret documents, in violation of various security regulations.) Here, if anywhere one would expect a discussion of the danger that government can pose to liberal ideals, as codified in the Bill of Rights. Subtly, however, the focus here shifts. Government in its role as defender of our rights is given a halo like that given Ellsberg in the picture; the fact that government is very often the agent against which our rights need to be defended fades quietly into the background. It was government, after all, that made segregation legal, permitted "separate but equal," and so on. The true theme of this chapter is given a false focus by the introductory example of individuals in conflict: A Nazi harangues a college audience and is interrupted by a punch in the face from an Israeli student, who is then arrested (p. 77).

There is no treatment in this chapter of the internal disciplines required by individuals for a Bill of Rights to emerge and be effective; no treatment of the responsibilities and virtues requiring high moral development in each participant before the "system" can function properly. (There is nothing in the system that liars and cheats can't falsify, even destroy.) "The Right to Be Yourself" (Section 2, pp. 81–89) makes it seem as if each individual is born innocent, virtuous, healthy, and reasonable, if only the prejudices and injustices of society do not injure him. There is no sense that moral seriousness and the hard work of self-improvement are required. It is as if the institutions derived from a Puritan vision can be conducted without the learning of severe Puritan virtues. Freedom is made to sound like an external reality. "The only limit on these rights," the authors say, "is that we may not invade the rights of other people in exercising them" (p. 81). They do not mention the limits set by a failure to develop qualities of mind and heart sufficient to become even a partially free person. "The real guardian of American liberties is 'the man in the street,'" the authors say piously at the end. "You and I and our neighbors can

only be as free as we really want to be" (p. 89). But how does one learn to "really want" to be free, or to discern of what freedom might consist? Is that simply given?

In addition, the authors are heavily dogmatic about "the separation of church and state." One does not object to their taking a position. But they do more than that; they rule other positions out. "In short, the *state*—the government—and religion are *separate*—not connected in any way at all" (p. 87). But that is not the sole interpretation of our tradition, often spoken of as Judaeo-Christian. That there are many historical, organic, practical, day-to-day connections between religious bodies and the state may be admitted by persons who uphold the First Amendment quite thoroughly. "To keep the government itself scrupulously neutral" (p. 87) is another quite sweeping and dogmatic claim, cherished by some, but by no means solitary in legitimacy. The authors are far more partisan here, particularly on aid to parochial schools, than they suspect. "The sincerity of both sides in those disagreements cannot be questioned," they assert (p. 88). One wishes they had given the positions and supporting reasons of the side opposite to their own.

Section 4, "Equality under the Law" (pp. 92–99), is almost entirely given over to blacks. The position may be described as simplified NAACP. The authors say that "Afro-Americans have probably suffered more from prejudice than any other group, partly because their skin color makes them so identifiable" (p. 93), but skin color alone won't explain the matter; people with yellow skin are identifiable, too; so are a good many Italians, Greeks, Arabs, and others. Further, West Indian and other blacks are often spectacularly successful in America.[1] One wonders whether, if American blacks had had the talent and energy that American Jews had, and if Jews had had the traditions and cultures that blacks brought to America, skin color would not have faded into insignificance. If blacks were as brilliant and successful in every field as Jews, their skin color might be a signal of excellence benefiting even those blacks of lesser talent. If Jews were as unprepared for urban, competitive life as blacks, one imagines that the virulence of anti-Semitism would be far more vicious than racism based on mere color. The point is that the authors do not place questions of black equality in a full cultural and historical context. Their treatment is therefore fraudulent, like all sentimental glosses over

[1] See Thomas Sowell, *Race and Economics* (New York: David Mckay, 1975).

reality. Incidentally, they make a factual error in asserting that "far more blacks than whites are poverty-stricken" (p. 93). They meant, no doubt, to add "proportionately."

Chapter 16, "Trial, Punishment, and Individual Rights," follows one entitled "Criminals, Citizens, and Government." The latter is graced with a picture of "Friendly policemen establishing rapport with children" (p. 315), so one is not surprised that its picture seems incredibly rosy. "Crimes of violence may actually be dropping in relation to the population," we are told, "while at the same time, petty thefts are on the upsurge. But a good deal of the property taking consists of petty offenses related to Americans' carelessness in leaving property in unlocked autos. . . . Much crime is not the planned work of professionals but the almost incidental misbehavior of troubled juveniles or adults" (pp. 312–313). Since three fourths of all Americans live in urban settings (p. 312), this section must be understood by many readers as the kind of lying one expects from schools. Kids whose lockers are broken into, who are held up at knife point in the lavatories or on the way home, who are slapped at random by "troubled juveniles" in their classes must learn from such writing the radical untruthfulness of liberal educators. These lies cry out to high heaven. "In short, it is not easy to know just how much crime there is in the United States," the authors conclude (p. 313). It certainly is easy, however, to count the double locks, barred windows, stolen bicycles, and muggings of friends in one's own block. "But everyone agrees that there is a crime problem," say the authors (p. 313).

So Chapter 16 approaches crime and punishment, as one might expect, in the glow of "individual rights." Crime is not regarded as an immoral act, nor even as a brutalizing destruction of the possibility of having individual human rights at all. The authors do not note that as long as there is not safety of life and limb, as long as there is not free movement in the streets, as long as one's property and locked doors are not respected, civil liberties of the most elemental kinds have been abridged. These civil liberties do not interest the authors; their hearts are won by the contemplation of the civil rights of those accused of crime. "Suppose you are arrested by the police on suspicion of having committed a crime" (p. 329). This is the controlling supposition of the chapter, which then elucidates how your rights would be protected at every stage of arraignment, trial, and punishment. A larger supposition would seem to be far more likely and cogent:

"Suppose you have been beaten, raped, or robbed at knife point. What would happen to the criminal? Would you dare to prosecute, and with what likelihood of success?" Proceeding on this latter supposition, far more experiential one would think, the chapter would have had a very different shape, while treating exactly the same topics. "It is true," the authors typically assert, "that all the constitutional protections have sometimes seemed to hamper the police and the courts. Yet it is important to remember that these rights are vital to the innocent" (pp. 332-333). Of course they are. But the pressing present danger to the system of criminal justice would surely seem to come from the opposite quarter, namely, the danger that the vast majority of criminals—even admitted criminals—are escaping prosecution. Indeed, those who are convicted are often left to feel that only bad luck did them in and that some legal technicality did not work out in their favor, as it had in the past or in the experience of their associates. The authors add: "Occasionally to let a few guilty people go unpunished is a small price to pay for safeguarding the rights of the vast majority of us who have done no wrong" (p. 333). Surely, *these* are not the rights of "the vast majority of us" most seriously violated or endangered now. Nor is the problem of our system of justice the fact that a few guilty people are going unpunished; legions of them are. One would not like to see individual rights abridged in the least. But to speak of the system of justice as though individual rights under formal legal accusation were the central issue of our time is surely a severe distortion.

"The chief criticism" of the prisons, the authors report, "is that they do not seem to 'cure' their inmates. . . . Many blame the prisons" (p. 36). And they ask a page later:

> Does rehabilitation work? Some critics believe that the majority of present prison inmates are too far gone to be helped. Others continue to be convinced that rehabilitation efforts are just "coddling." . . . But the new rehabilitation efforts sound hopeful to many who cite statistics to prove that some offenders, if treated early in their careers, can be saved from a life of crime (p. 347).

The authors seem to treat crime as though it were a case of mysterious flu, from which one could be saved by wholesome medicine. And they end up advising citizens to be cooperative and not contribute their individual "mite to crime" (p. 349)—as though the healthy and law-abiding were to blame.

One misses in this text any sense that criminality is also immorality

and that criminality is the most primitive form of destroying civic order and civil rights. One ends up sympathizing with the few "troubled juveniles and adults." Had the authors written *Crime and Punishment,* one feels, they would have called it *Crime and Sympathy.* They amply demonstrate the irrelevance of their philosophical outlook to the world of daily reality known to many of their young readers. The point is not that the principles upheld by the authors are unworthy of care; it is, rather, that these principles are smothered in a sentimental gloss on reality. The sentimentality of their vision, of course, is not original. It is unfailingly liberal and enlightened. It never questions the conventional liberal vision, not even from the basic daily experiences of students for whom the book is intended.

Chapters 18, 19, and 20, which represent three fifths of Part VI, "To Promote the General Welfare," deal respectively with the government and business, the economy, and jobs. What is most amazing about these chapters is a sudden shift in basic principles. Until now, the authors have been steadfast in their concern for individual rights; suddenly, progressive thinking demands that they favor the extension of governmental controls. Suppose, for a moment, that the freedom of business might be stifled as effectively as freedom of the press. Suppose, in addition, that the authors carried the vision of laissez-faire which they uphold for individuals and for the press to a vision of laissez-faire for business and the economy. A respectable body of thought does just that. It is not heard in this volume.

Nor is their own fundamental transition, from the liberal principle of defending individual rights and a free press to the "liberal" principle of supporting extensions of governmental control over business corporations, the economy, and the job market, ever clearly addressed, argued for, and defended against objections. "The United States has a theoretically *free enterprise system*—most businesses belong to private individuals. . . . In fact, however, even from the earliest days, we have had a *mixed economy* in our country—one on which government has had a great deal of influence. . . . Government's effect on private business is almost incalculable" (p. 373). Far from viewing this situation with alarm (imagine such sentences about individual rights or the freedom of the press), the authors rush right on to justify it: "Where does the government get its power over business?" (p. 373). They list the things that government actually does in the economic sphere: government as promoter, as buyer, as manager, and as regu-

lator (pp. 376–377). There is nothing here about the government as deflator, inflator, bungler, waster, corrupter of desires, and limiter of choices. The government is imagined as a kind of moral agency, incapable of doing wrong. Under the heading "Government Regulation Is Controversial," the authors bring themselves to the conclusion of Chapter 18: "Government regulation . . . has become a well-established aspect of the way we do business in the United States" (pp. 388–389).

Chapter 19 contains sections on transportation, on communications, on power, on regulation, on businesses run by the government (the post office, utilities), on money, and on prosperity and depression. The tone of all these sections is favorable to government. One quotation may suggest the decidedly pro-government drift: "Today some citizens fear that America has gone too far along the road to *socialism*—a government-owned economy. Others believe that more government planning and management is not only desirable but also inevitable because the economy has become too large and complicated for the old *laissez-faire idea*—no intervention by government in business" (p. 411). This may seem to the authors an evenhanded argument. They speak later of lawmakers who must "choose between these two points of view" (p. 414). But they have just made it appear that only top officials of corporations—and not even all of those—hold the old idea, now obsolete because the economy has become too large, and so on. Then they coyly add that the lawmakers' "decisions may be influenced by business lobbyists" (p. 414). They say nothing about the lobbyists for education and social science or about antibusiness groups. One's clear impression is that small, benighted, but powerful groups insist, against all good will and sweet reason, on perpetuating ideas whose time has passed. That there has been for some years a *liberal* argument against the growth of government escapes the authors' attention utterly. The possibility that the danger to liberal principles may come from a direction opposite that from which they expect it never disturbs their complacency.

Chapter 20, "Government and Your Job," drives some of these ideas home. Under the headings "New Governmental Responsibilities" and "Symbols of Change," the following passages, rich in self-satisfaction, pass uncriticized and without reflection:

> The deductions from your paycheck symbolize major changes in American life over the past 100 years. They show the new functions assumed by gov-

ernment to try to protect children, working men and women, old people, and the sick from undue economic hardship.

The union dues you paid were deducted with government approval. They mean that today the government not only tolerates unions but also protects the workers' right to organize and to bargain for favorable wages and working conditions with employers. The Old Age and Survivors' Insurance and Medicare deductions represent the federal government's official provision for your eventual retirement income as well as for doctor and hospital bills. The money withheld for income taxes will go, in part, to pay for educating your children or perhaps for your own college education.

You can count on a certain amount of income, even in times of future unemployment, thanks to other government-enforced programs. Government decides, by law, when you are old enough to go to work full time. Government may also have a role in your training for a vocation or profession which suits your abilities. A government agency may even help you find a job. All these programs and regulations are relatively new, some of them less than thirty years old (p. 417).

The rest of the chapter is mainly about unions and governmental protections on the job. Mention is made of discrimination against blacks in some unions, none of the fact that more blacks belong to unions than to any other organizations except the churches and the Democratic party—far more, proportionately, than whites. The text is guardedly prounion. Mainly, it is sweetness and light.

On a first reading, this text went down easily enough. Familiar stuff. Hard work went into it. Thoroughness. Clarity. Simplicity. On reflection, it was disturbing in the extreme, for under the guise of evenhandedness, plain ideology is being transmitted. With much of this ideology, I am in sympathy, but it should not be presented so uncritically. It is as though the disciplined heart has been cut out of the Western tradition, while only sweet sentiment remains. Gone are the tough-mindedness and the dissent from conventional wisdom. Gone is a concern for new dangers arising from present illusions. The obvious good will of the authors is no substitute for hard thought. It is not healthy that textbooks should convey such dangerous ideology without challenge. Even if in the name of liberalism one sees government as the chief moral agent in our time, surely there is reason enough in the liberal tradition to sound countervailing alarms. In addition, one owes more respect than the authors have paid to the best of their conservative adversaries. One-sidedness is not liberal.

The Trivialization of Government / Jeane Kirkpatrick

THOUGH DESIGNATED AS HAVING BEEN WRITTEN for high school students, *American Government in Action* is a better introduction to American government than are many college textbooks I have read. The facts presented are accurate, all the important branches of government are discussed, the prose is direct, and the student is introduced to such "greats" as Thomas Hobbes, James Madison, and John Locke. Why then complain?

The worst shortcoming of this volume is dullness, the second most serious shortcoming is intellectual sloppiness, and the third is its failure to communicate the basic values of the Western tradition. These weaknesses are, I believe, closely interrelated—because basic values are more interesting as well as more important than administrative arrangements and because intellectual rigor leads to clarity about the relations between basic values, institutional practices, and daily lives.

Resnick and Nerenberg tell us that in this book they hope to communicate "what government actually does to affect the lives of real people, especially the real people who study its pages" (p. v). To achieve this goal they describe processes, raise questions, and provide in each chapter a "feature story"—"Play a Part in Democracy"—about an actual person facing a specific problem to which government is relevant. By presenting material in a "lively, simple writing style . . . within the student's own frame of reference" (p. vi) the authors hope to make government more "meaningful and relevant" to the late adolescent who will read the book.

Whether or not a desire to involve students leads to a pedestrian account of everyday life or to a discussion of fundamental concepts and values depends on the imagination and understanding of the authors. Fairy tales, as Bruno Bettelheim has recently reminded us, are intensely relevant to, though literally remote from, the everyday problems of ordinary children. Concepts such as the rule of law, due

process, and limited government are potentially as relevant to the lives of adolescents. Unfortunately, Resnick and Nerenberg do not bring the talents or insights of the brothers Grimm to writing an introduction to government: The product resembles the Dick and Jane readers more than it resembles Hansel and Gretel.

I appreciate the fact that the potential audience of an introductory textbook imposes limits on what can be communicated and how. My experience as a teacher and mother has disabused me—I expect forever—of illusions about the attention span and horizons of the adolescent. It is precisely because the limits on what one might hope to teach are relatively narrow that the substance of what one communicates is so important.

Take, for example, the first chapter, which is addressed to the question "Why Government?" To answer this question, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* is invoked. The authors recall that the boys in the story "set up the rudiments of a government—decision makers, doers, thinkers," suggesting that "early man probably formed bands and tribes in much the same fashion." This is offered as somehow proving that people want government " 'to decide things,' to achieve benefits individuals cannot get while acting on their own, to set up rules and regulations for the good of all, to try to control people's natural selfishness and thoughtlessness" (p. 3). So far, so good. But despite this relatively auspicious beginning, and despite quotations from Madison, Locke, and Hobbes, the authors settle for a very different explanation. Government, they conclude, "is the means men and women have used from time immemorial to achieve benefits which they could not realize alone" (p. 3). This statement suggests that governments are based on a rational calculation of advantage, a notion also advanced by the social-contract theorists, but the Resnick and Nerenberg version of the advantages sought through government make those advantages a good deal less critical than those postulated by Hobbes, Locke, Madison, or Jefferson. The authors, to be sure, refer to the desire for protection against domestic and foreign aggression as a reason for government, and, in one of those marginal boxes that invite the inattention of even serious readers, they quote Hobbes on the necessity of government to industry, commerce, arts, letters, society, and human happiness, but their emphasis is on draft cards, traffic lights, road building, highway patrolmen, and interdependence. The "Answer Key" and "Main Ideas" which teachers receive along with

the text make clear, should clarification be needed, what the authors are trying hardest to communicate.

"Government," they assert, "becomes necessary as society becomes more complex because of the additional kinds of protection and the increasing number of services which people come to need as a result of new interrelationships and complications in economic and social living." This formulation not only implies that simple societies would have no need for government at all (despite the authors' previous assurances that government has existed since time immemorial), it also serves as the basis for a "consumer" orientation to government. This orientation is further developed and emphasized in an unfortunate image which pictures the government as merchant and we, the citizens, as "200,000,000 customers." In a section headed "The American Government's Customers," the authors assert, "Were someone to charge merchandise to any one of us at the local department store without consulting us, our anger would be intense. Government charges a great many services to us all. Are we making sure that our representatives know what we want and that they are giving it to us at a reasonable price?" (p. 9). These are curious notions, which depart from both the classic ideas of political philosophy and the American tradition.

The bases of government have been explored by such major figures in Western civilization as Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas, Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Sigmund Freud among others. These philosophers differed in their views about "why government," but all saw it as rooted in human needs which transcend particular forms of social organization. Plato and Aristotle believed that government was necessary to the good life, a concept which included the moral development of citizens. St. Augustine argued that governments were instituted to preserve a modicum of peace in the earthly city so that pilgrims would be free to concentrate on the City of God. Thomas Hobbes, whose view of human nature was no rosier than Augustine's, believed that government was required to protect men from ceaseless striving after power which would make life without authority a war of each against all. Like Hobbes, Freud also saw security and civilization as dependent on authority in the family, city, tribe, and nation. Though less impressed with man's depravity than either Hobbes or Freud, John Locke saw government as necessary to the protection of property and other rights, and Thomas Jefferson found the Lockean position so persuasive that he wrote into

the Declaration of Independence that all men were endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights among which were life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and that "to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men."

Resnick and Nerenberg, of course, were not writing a textbook on the foundations of authority or the idea of the state. Why does it matter, really, that their explanation of the bases of government does not take account of the views of the great political philosophers, who, in any case, do not agree fully with one another, or the experience of history, which indicates that all societies, however primitive or however sophisticated, have institutions for authoritative decision making. It matters, first, because the Resnick and Nerenberg conception suggests that government is less important than it is to such fundamental human concerns as association, survival, security, freedom, and morality. When government is reduced to a set of administrative arrangements designed for the mutual convenience of those residing within specified boundaries, it becomes impossible to understand the importance of politics to human history. When government is reduced to a commercial relationship and citizens to customers, the effect is still worse. Not only is government trivialized, but citizenship is deprived of moral and social meaning. The importance of political community to human affairs fades, and studying government becomes analogous to reading *Consumer Reports*—which also provides good advice to shoppers.

I do not propose that the state should be glorified, or that every high school senior be forced to read Plato's *Crito* and pass an examination on why Socrates preferred death to defying the laws of Athens. I am suggesting rather that the authors missed an opportunity to introduce students to an interesting and significant aspect of the great tradition (a few quotations in boxes will not do the job), and that both comprehension and citizenship are adversely affected by their text's pedestrian treatment of this vital subject. The authors assert in the preface that their book "tells what government actually does to affect the lives of real people, especially the real people who study its pages." And it is true enough that governments build roads, collect taxes, and draft selected persons for military service and that policemen and fire fighters protect life and property—but the activities of government touch the lives of citizens at a thousand points so that, as Resnick and Nerenberg affirm, the government shapes the context in which

each of us is born, grows up, works, and dies. Because modern governments, especially, surround and condition our lives, because they make demands and enforce them with severe sanctions, such as the loss of liberty and life, it matters a great deal who governs and how they are held accountable. If students think of government as a kind of supermarket in which they as shoppers are free to pick and choose, they can hardly be expected to attach much importance to a discussion of the forms of government.

The authors *say* that the way power is organized matters, but their description of the differences among regimes suffers from the same flatness and conceptual ambiguity as their explanation of the bases of government. Take, for example, their treatment of totalitarianism. "When one person or a group of clever, powerful men and women seizes a government, often by force, and holds on to it, by threats or by force, that government is called an *autocracy*, a *dictatorship*, or an *oligarchy*. These are all terms for totalitarian forms of government" (p. 5). To illustrate, they add, "The Soviet Union, China, Yugoslavia, Spain, and Argentina all have totalitarian forms of government." Resnick and Nerenberg use *totalitarian* as synonymous with nondemocratic, though such usage neither conforms to definitions of political scientists who use the term, nor permits distinctions to be made among types of nondemocratic governments.

It is important that students (and teachers) learn to think clearly about nondemocratic governments, since autocracy and other forms of authoritarian rule remain today, as they were in the past, the most common form of political organization. Even casual examination reveals that autocracies differ in their goals, in their policies, and especially, in their impacts on the lives of individuals. A totalitarian regime is distinguished by the determination of the rulers to transform society, culture, and personality through the use of political power. Such goals are associated with a comprehensive ideology and a single ruling ideological party. They require an effort to control all social institutions, including the family, economy, and education. The Soviet Union and China are examples of such regimes. Traditional autocracies use power for the purpose of preserving rather than transforming beliefs, values, social relations, and economic relations—Spain and Argentina are examples. Between these two extreme types there exist a variety of more or less ambitious rulers who exercise power within more or less binding constraints. When Resnick and Nerenberg

suggest that the governments of China, Spain, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Argentina are equally determined to tell people "where to live, where to work, what to study, how much they may earn, what they may buy, what to think" they are simply mistaken. The Franco government in Spain made—and the Videla government in Argentina makes—no effort to control residence, employment, or the habits of consumers, but on the part of each there was or is a slight effort to influence education and a somewhat greater effort to influence what people think about politics. Only the Chinese government is fully serious about controlling all the activities listed in the text. To be sure, the governments listed by the authors share some characteristics. None guarantees its citizens full personal rights as we know them, none has institutionalized ways of holding its rulers accountable or assuring everyone a voice in determining who shall rule or to what broad ends. Hence Resnick and Nerenberg's use of the term *totalitarian* violates the standard usage of political scientists and obscures important differences among these types of government.

Unfortunately, conceptual confusion also blurs the discussion of democracy. The United States is said to be a democratic republic, presumably because "all power belongs to the people" who are "considered equal." But we are told, immediately afterward, that Spain and Russia are also republics "by virtue of the fact that they have no hereditary monarch" (p. 8). Since these have also been cited as examples of totalitarian governments, the authors have apparently created a new political category: the totalitarian republic, which turns out to be any nonhereditary nondemocracy—that is, any dictatorship. Though Robespierre would have loved the concept, it is probably merciful that it did not occur to him.

Back to democracy—popular sovereignty and equality are emphasized, but no sooner is the importance of political equality introduced than the authors turn to the ways in which Americans differ. Again, the "Answer Key" in the *Teacher's Guide* helps clarify their intent. That "Key" informs us that Americans are unlike *and unequal* in race, religion, economic well-being, education, age, preferences, and abilities (p. 29; emphasis added). I am baffled about this juxtaposition of observations. Indeed, I do not understand why the demographic description of the population should be included in a chapter on the bases and varieties of government, unless, as the rhetorical questions and the "Answer Key" imply, the authors hope to indicate that the

differences among people are relevant to political equality and also that the very nature of modern populations increases the range of problems—pollution, mobility, traffic, automation, crime—to which government must respond. One wonders why in the discussion of democracy there is no mention of political competition, of periodic elections, of opposition, or of free speech, press, and assembly.

The problems with this discussion of the foundations and forms of government are intellectual rather than ideological. Concepts and arguments are not so much oversimplified as confused. One does not doubt, really, despite a certain patina of neutrality, that the authors prefer democratic to autocratic institutions, that they think government is important, and that they hope to stimulate participation. But their analytic and rhetorical capacities are not equal to their good intentions.

Similar problems affect the discussion of most other subjects. Good will, high hopes, and fuzzy thinking combine to render the chapters on individual rights, crime and justice, and government and the economy less interesting, less accurate, and more optimistic than they should be. All understate the conflicting values and intractable problems which render these areas difficult.

The Chapter called "Our Liberties and Our Rights" begins, somewhat surprisingly, with a quotation from John Lilburne and the Levellers on the "unalienable rights" of all, and—somewhat more surprisingly—calls the section on speech, religion, and assembly "The Right to Be Yourself," a guarantee which the courts have not so far incorporated into the Fifth or Fourteenth amendment. The concepts of due process and equal protection are introduced but not illustrated. The first ten amendments to the Constitution are quoted, as are Justices Holmes, Brandeis, and Douglas. The clear and present danger clause is paraphrased, and a photograph of a smiling Daniel Ellsberg accompanies a text that explains how unsettling to our prejudices and preconceptions free speech can be. None of the discussions of speech, obscenity, libel, assembly, or religion provides much indication of the very real conflict among very real values: as when William Shockley embarrasses black students with a speech given on a college campus on the intellectual inferiority of blacks, or when the sado-masochistic misogyny of *Hustler* panders to the sickest tendencies of its audience, or when the practice of polygamy collides with law and custom in a monogamous society. The authors' selection of the victims of intoler-

ance—Communists, Nazis, blacks, pacifists, Japanese—are not only conventional, they are outdated.

A better illustration of the clash of rights is provided in the discussion of property rights, though that case is marred by a heading which pits "Public Welfare" against property rights, as though individual property rights were not part of public welfare. In the discussion of civil rights there is no indication at all of the knotty moral and legal problems we have encountered in attempting to move from the elimination of de jure segregation (as required by *Brown* v. *Board of Education,* which is quoted by the authors) to the elimination of de facto segregation through such devices as busing (which is referred to by way of a picture). But the most important omission in this discussion is any link between rights and duties. It is true that elsewhere in the book, taxes, military service, and participation are described, but it would have been appropriate and useful to take the opportunity to link, in the traditional fashion, individual rights to the obligations of citizenship. And it would have helped correct the image of citizen as consumer introduced in the first chapter.

A similar tendency to optimistic oversimplification affects the chapter entitled "Trial, Punishment, and Individual Rights." There is a description of state, juvenile, and federal courts and courts of appeals, of juries and bail, of the selection of judges, and of the penal system. Along the way, an extraordinary doctrine of responsibility is presented. In one passage we are told quite literally that the automobile—already blamed for traffic jams, air pollution, the energy crisis, highway costs, and traffic fatalities—may also be the chief culprit in the failure of the judicial system to provide justice: "The American automobile is largely responsible for one of the most annoying, if not the most serious problem of justice in this country" (p. 338). The automobile is to blame, it turns out, because it so frequently permits itself to be stolen or wrecked, and these episodes overcrowd court dockets. The question of responsibility is further clouded when, at the end of the chapter, the authors suggest by quoting from a report of the President's Crime Commission, that we may *all* be responsible for crime:

> Each time a citizen fails to report an offense, declines to take the commonsense precautions against crime his police department tells him to, is disrespectful to an officer of the law, shirks his duty as a juror or performs it with a biased mind or a hate-filled heart, or refuses to hire a qualified man because he is an ex-convict, he contributes his mite to crime (p. 349).

Though the point of view of the authors is, as always, presented obliquely, it is nonetheless clear that they favor an approach that emphasizes rehabilitation (furloughs, counseling, probation, parole) to punishment. Who wouldn't—if the evidence on the failure of rehabilitation programs (so compellingly marshaled by James Q. Wilson, among others) could be so easily ignored as it is by the authors. Obviously, incarceration makes no sense—economic or moral—for criminals who can be "cured." But until palliatives more effective than those now available are developed, someone must think about another problem that seems to escape the notice of Resnick and Nerenberg: how to protect the community from the aggression of the criminal. Competing values, unpleasant evidence, hard choices—all are avoided in this discussion of crime, the criminal, and the courts. So is any mention of the role of authority, morality, or alienation in contributing to crime. "Easy answers for hard questions" would be an appropriate advertisement for this textbook, which has been highly successful in sidestepping difficulties.

A particularly clear-cut example of sidestepping issues is found in the chapters on government and business. The competing claims of a market system and a socialist economy are neatly ignored by the authors. They assert that though "the United States has a theoretically *free enterprise system*" (p. 372), in fact it now has and has had "even from the earliest days" a *mixed economy*. Currency, mails, roads, transport were the early mechanisms for government involvement in the economy; today government promotes, purchases, manages, regulates, and otherwise involves itself in many, perhaps most, aspects of the economy. The authors provide examples: the FCC, Amtrak, the St. Lawrence Seaway, highway regulation, the CAB, NASA, the TVA, the Post Office, the Rand Corporation, the Federal Reserve Board, the FHA, the FDIC, and the FDA. They lay out before the student a panoply of government regulation and initiative with the assurance that "No 'socialistic plot' was the cause of this government involvement" (p. 392).

The reason is rather that "in recent years, as the economy has become larger and more complex, the government's activities have increased accordingly" (p. 392). Of course the authors are right to emphasize increasing interdependence as a source of the progressively larger economic role of government. They would be more accurate, however, if they also took account of the role that human decisions

have played in the process. The debate over *socialism* versus *laissez-faire* is not finally just a matter of whose ox is being gored, as the authors suggest that it is. Cartoons and anecdotes make clear Resnick and Nerenberg's preference for the big-government solution to problems. The chapters on business and government would be more straightforward and more enlightening to the student if they stated their preference openly, argued the case for their position, and let someone with different views state the contrary. As it is, neither the questions nor the answers are clear.

As always, it is important to be fair. This textbook is not uniquely flawed. Its shortcomings are typical of the genre. For all I know, they may be prerequisites for publication or adoption or both. I doubt, however, that publishers and classroom teachers require carelessly defined concepts and non sequiturs. *American Government in Action* is a thoroughly conventional book—one finds in it the familiar but, so far as I know, unproved assumption that students will be more interested in a subject if it is continually related to their daily lives, the familiar flatness that produces the familiar "on the one hand" and "on the other hand" approach that reflects a fundamental confusion about the relations between objectivity and neutrality, the familiar bootlegging of the authors' point of view, and the familiar point of view.

That point of view—become so common as almost to go unnoticed—features the determination of the authors to approach American society and government "critically." This is doubtless a reaction to all those texts and all those authors who presented everything American as "biggest and best."

To protect themselves against purveying chauvinism, many textbook authors have developed a kind of all-purpose disclaimer which assures the reader that, whatever the achievements in a particular area, perfection has not been reached and much remains to be done. While this orientation is a reaction against one aspect of the American tradition (which incidentally is shared by virtually all other nations), it expresses another one, captured in a jingle cited by Edward Banfield:

> Good, better, best
> Never let it rest
> Till your good is better
> And your better, best.

It is, of course, commendable to approach one's self, one's children, one's work, one's country with a critical spirit, but there are two

problems with this fashionable orientation. First, it is possible—perhaps even likely—that too much emphasis on the critical or "problem" approach in childhood may produce citizens without the diffuse attachment which is widely believed to be necessary to the stability of a regime, and second, if students are taught to see everything as almost equally imperfect they are ill prepared to distinguish those areas which, in fact, constitute grounds for shame from those which are causes for legitimate pride. The American record in some fields—protecting individual rights and providing due process, for example—is extremely good as compared to the practices of virtually any other nation. The record regarding the rights of blacks has, until recently, been very bad. Our government today is the only one in the industrialized world that does not guarantee medical care to all. And our social security laws remain discriminatory in their treatment of women workers.

Resnick and Nerenberg did not invent the "evenhanded" approach. They merely adopted the current fashion. They are, I think, less to be faulted for this than for their lack of intellectual rigor. Even that, however, is so typical of the genre that it should probably be regarded as an institutional failing rather than merely an individual one—a nearly inevitable outcome of the separation of scholarship and pedagogy. When top-ranking political scientists write textbooks for high schools, there will be top-flight textbooks. The alternative, I fear, is a mediocre product of which *American Government in Action* is by no means the worst example.

Government As Social Worker

Anne Crutcher

THIS IS A GENERALLY COMPETENT TEXTBOOK in American government, marred chiefly, where it is flawed, by superficiality and a tendency to be banal. The impulse to liberal trendiness is there, but it is restrained by a preternatural cautiousness. It's hard to imagine some 600 pages in which more frequent use is made of "sometimes," "on the other hand," and "some people think."

There are times when it becomes a kind of baby-talk broad-mindedness, as when the authors observe that "Most of us dislike war" (p. 12). Or, again, when, in discussing forms of government, they get to anarchy (p. 8). They tell how "a relatively small number of Americans" have thought government unnecessary and then declare that "Today no nation is an anarchy." One has a sense that the *today* is supposed to neutralize some remote anthropological challenge. Meanwhile, nothing is said about the situations, past and contemporary, when history, rather than theory, removes the constraints of law.

Partly, it would seem, this is a matter of wanting to cover all bases and not offend anybody. It also appears, however, to reflect overextension of a genuine American value—the idea that all issues are open questions in a society claiming the right to call itself free.

Thus the book can be morally slippery even while presenting a facade of value-free description. An account of Shays's Rebellion manages to focus sympathetically on all the Marxist clichés about "rich city folk" while asking the student whether it might not have been possible for Daniel Shays to have taken "other steps" (p. 35) to solve his problems.

Within the limits of this slightly disingenuous mannerism, though, Resnick and Nerenberg do very well indeed in projecting some classic American values. The area of their greatest success is in the parts

of the book concerned with the basic structures and processes of politics in the United States.

They manage to infuse with a sense of success their descriptions of the way Congress works, the way people get elected to office, and the pressures that enter into the decisions they make on behalf of the rest of the country. More important still, they very adroitly convey the way compromises and balancings of interest are at the heart of the system.

In fact, they do it so well that one is reminded how often other attitude shapers, in the communications media, for example, tend to present the compromises and trade-offs as corruption. Even lobbyists, who are virtually never mentioned in the press in other than pejorative terms, are shown to have a legitimate function as well as dubious influence.

These authors also avoid giving political parties the slight aura of corruption vulgarly assigned to them—particularly their state and local hierarchies. All this, while being quite ready to admit the ballot-box stuffing and graft Boss Tweed and his friends might be accused of.

The authors' pattern is to intersperse explanations with little vignettes of relevant personalities and events. It works particularly well in the political arena, where these illustrate the way anybody can rise in American politics, yet show the money problems and other difficulties that electoral office entails.

Besides making that kind of political participation seem possible and worthwhile, Resnick and Nerenberg contribute further to the idea of the effectiveness of citizens in the American system by showing the way the smaller and more informal pressure groups can influence important public events. A story illustrating the influence of the League of Women Voters (p. 142) is a perfect example.

This reinforcement of a general faith in the responsiveness of government in the United States also extends to what the book has to say about individual rights and justice. At the same time, there is a nice sensitivity to the idea that there may be a price—that one right may conflict with another and that public choices are often between competing desiderata, or even between greater and lesser evils.

This comes out in the way Chapter 16, "Trial, Punishment and Individual Rights," shows the interests of the individual being weighed against those of society. The authors take note that Danny Escobedo went back to prison on another charge after his earlier conviction had

been reversed by a decision of the Supreme Court that a lawyer must be provided during the interrogation of a person arrested on suspicion of having committed a crime.

Just about every political institution and practice discussed in the book is approached with an assumption of honest purpose. Unlike all too many analysts of American government and society, these authors never imply that when an act or policy has unhappy side effects they should have been foreseen or that they were what was wanted by unscrupulous persons all along.

Sadly, however, when dealing with crime Resnick and Nerenberg depart from traditional Western concepts. They are considerably less free with the qualifiers when talking about possible reasons for both individual crime and such group eruptions as the inner-city riots of the last decade. They seem awfully sure no black or poor person is to blame for anything. Anything that happens in a ghetto has an environmental explanation and no moral dimension.

The rise in petty thefts in all parts of the United States is "related to Americans' carelessness in leaving property in unlocked autos." Mere car thefts are dealt with lightly, and we are assured that "many of the stolen autos . . . are taken by joy-riding youngsters," and these incidents are dismissed as being of little importance (both, p. 313).

We are told further that "riots, lawlessness, public health problems are all connected with the relative poverty of some of our people" (p. viii). There are also "troubled juveniles" (p. 313), for whose behavior explanations are to be sought chiefly in psychology. "What physical or emotional influences might cause a child to steal cars?" the authors inquire sympathetically (p. ix).

More shocking, there is an attitude that whatever the young and poor are doing wrong, the mature and affluent are doing worse. These two educators should perhaps not be blamed for quoting something as official as the *Report of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice;* it might even be said that any such report represents the American mainstream. One hopes not, though, when such blatantly prejudicial statements as these turn up: "The price-fixing by 29 electrical equipment companies alone probably cost utilities, and therefore, the public, more money than is reported as stolen by burglars in a year," and "Perhaps most important, the public tends to be indifferent to business crime or even to sympathize with the offenders" (both, p. 324).

Not surprisingly, cures for crime are discussed in terms of job creation, friendlier policemen, policemen with more training in social work, and an end to racism. What is entirely left out is any mention of individual moral responsibility as a set of attitudes to be inculcated in children by the home, the church, and the school.

The arson and looting that go with urban riots are discussed in the same way. They are, we are led to believe, ills curable by better housing, better schools, higher incomes in the ghetto, and an end to racial discrimination. There is no mention of the erosion of moral authority that has come about because the ghetto is largely isolated from both the middle-class black community and the white world.

It is within living memory that indoctrination in a morality of precepts came upon American children of all races and classes and from many sides. Even before the Supreme Court decision banning prayers and scripture readings in public schools, much of that had been drained from the curriculum. Now it's hard to find any emphasis on the old morality of individual responsibility.

These writers, certainly, seem to accept absolutely whole the idea that a social breakdown such as a ghetto riot represents an assertion of legitimate demands rather than a collapse of civilizing inhibitions. To see anything one might want becomes an excuse for taking it, to know that somebody else is in some way better off becomes an excuse for any destructiveness.

In many ways, this is a more pernicious departure from traditional values than the myth that preceded it: that ghetto crime was brought on by hunger and acute deprivation. The newer line of thought not only dignifies a more frivolous attitude toward the relationship of one person's needs and desires to another person's property; it implicitly accepts the idea that there are no limits society can or should set on the way people may express dissatisfaction.

One of the few counterweights to this sort of thinking turns up in a vignette on draft resistance, in which a college student protests the indictments of Dr. Benjamin Spock and the Reverend William Sloane Coffin on the grounds that their civil disobedience was an act of honest dissent for which they were openly prepared to take the consequences. The reply, by Fred M. Vinson, Jr., Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division, makes the point succinctly that willingness to take the consequences of breaking the law in no way implies that there

should be no consequences. The point remains that " 'law becomes meaningless when its violation is condoned' " (p. 323).

Such heartening reassertions of political fundamentals are, however, exceptions to the rule that wherever concepts of ethics and morals come up in this book, they are almost sure to make responsibility collective, social, and utopian. In spite of their scrupulousness about presenting all the leading viewpoints on important questions and doing it impartially, the authors do allow themselves a few value-laden words, as when they note that "Some idealists argue that civil disobedience—breaking unjust laws—is more moral than standing by and doing nothing about social wrongs" (p. 324). This statement is followed by the suggestion that a complete overhaul of our laws to eliminate unfair and unrealistic ones would be a good way to fight crime.

Predictably, the implicit and explicit projection of an almost completely collective, social, and utopian ethic reaches its zenith in the sections of the book that deal with the welfare state. Far from upholding the Western, and peculiarly American, concept of self-reliance and initiative, Section VI, "To Promote the General Welfare," which includes chapters on the relationship of government to private business, to the economy as a whole, to labor, and to social security and public welfare, conveys a picture of the ordinary citizen as a completely passive creature whose major function is to challenge the ingenuity of an anxious and guilt-ridden government to fix up his life.

One of the most insidious by-products of this attitude is the concept of work it creates. One of the greatest sources of American dynamism in the nineteenth century was the way frontier necessities brought all categories of the population into direct connection with tangible reality. If it was not the virgin forests to be cut down and crops to be planted, it was new business organizations to be created and new alignments of political power to be devised. The point is that each was an extraordinary challenge to the vitality of their pragmatism. The way people deployed their energies had a thundering impact on the way they lived—or didn't.

It's still true, of course, but many forces, including the use of such textbooks as this one, conspire to conceal the fact. And not the least of the forces obscuring reality on this point is the new way of thinking about what work is and why jobs exist.

This book follows the current liberally oriented patterns of talking

about jobs with almost no relation to intrinsic purposes they might serve. Jobs are discussed as social situations to be tailored to the needs, entitlements, and desires of those who might hold them. Jobs are discussed as if they were capable of almost infinite manipulation by central planning authorities.

Here, Resnick and Nerenberg depart somewhat from certain of the attitudes they project to such good effect in the sections on the political process. Instead of acknowledging the idea that there might be complex networks of interests to be balanced, there are assumptions of limitless power—and if it doesn't exist, it ought to.

Again, perhaps a couple of textbook writers shouldn't be blamed for taking seriously the report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, which suggests that two million new jobs be provided, with on-the-job training for the hard-core unemployed. The authors offer this with no hint that anything but the selfishness of the rich might get in the way of its achievement. Meanwhile, the idea that work has some relation to doing what needs to be done is ever more shadowy (p. 460).

The truth is that in dealing with welfare, housing, urban problems, and education, these writers seldom look beneath the surface of a cliché or tell the whole story. Always, too, these subjects are dealt with in a manner that reinforces the image of omnipotent government versus the grievance-ridden, helpless citizen. For example: "A slum is created where almost everyone is poor, many are jobless or sick, and educational standards are low. Some of these unhappy people turn to crime or delinquency. Especially in hot weather . . ." (p. 464).

The earnest assumption that each failure should but spur government to greater effort to do right by blameless unfortunates who can be expected to do little for themselves is never more vivid than in this one: "Now many people believe that public housing is not the best cure for slums. Over the years the huge public apartment buildings themselves have become run-down. The families living there continue to have many problems they had in the slum areas" (p. 465).

Again, in education, problems are described in a manner that reinforces the impression of a one-way flow of obligations. "Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, and Indian children seem to be learning less than others, not because of innate ability but sometimes because of inferior schooling" (p. 450).

Explaining how one American in eight lives in poverty, with most

of those in the "hard-core unemployed" category with "no hope" of earning enough to support themselves, Resnick and Nerenberg state that "Many are members of minority groups who, chiefly because of inadequate education and prejudiced employers, have a hard time finding work" (p. 442).

Having described the many programs for aiding the poor by means of welfare, health services, food stamps, public housing, pensions, job training programs, and the rest, Resnick and Nerenberg come to the summing up. Their idea of an impartial opener for an evaluation of welfare is the question "Is all this help enough?" (p. 446).

They admit that "some critics" say there is a loss of incentive in people who know that welfare is always available to them and that "many taxpayers" worry about costs. But the preponderance of emphasis is on the likelihood that any lack of success can be blamed on not spending and doing enough, not protecting the dignity of recipients, and not doing more to combat racism.

Getting to the specifics of the poverty program, there is again an analysis that seems to assume a large class of supine people of whom nothing can be expected and a government of which everything can be expected. The authors' summary of pros and cons on the poverty program lists these possible flaws in it: (1) not enough money spent; (2) uncoordinated administration; (3) too little participation by the poor at a decision-making level; (4) too much decision making by the poor; (5) too little effort to end racial discrimination; and (6) too few efforts to help private businessmen create jobs that can be performed by unskilled and semiskilled workers (p. 447).

Even in the midst of the manifestations of faith in social engineering, there is a strange tone of acceptance of certain existing conditions as immutable—the hopelessness of a sizable part of the population trying to make a living, for example. It is interesting, too, that this loss of feeling for the dynamic and changeable in American life, once so characteristic of the national mood, sometimes makes Resnick and Nerenberg fatalistic about trends.

For example, although the latest revision of this book was in 1973, a certain number of the tendencies taken as irreversible absolutes at the time it was written seem to be turning around. White flight to the suburbs is a case in point. It is treated as a phenomenon that can only continue, whereas, in fact, there is now, in any number of American cities, a movement of prosperous middle-class people of all colors

to resettle in the city, often by means of rehabilitating what has been ghetto (p. 471).

The chapters in which the relationship of government to the business community and to the economy are discussed generally do well in conveying a sense of many forces in delicate equilibrium—almost as well as the political chapters. There is a certain echo of the omnipotent government note struck in the chapters on general welfare, however. "Especially since the Great Depression of the 1930's, Americans have expected government to solve the problems of the *business cycle*—periodic ups and downs in the nation's economy. The government can and does act to prevent recessions," say the authors, with every evidence of believing that no qualifiers are required (p. 411). Again, there is the aura of utopian expectation, which so strongly contradicts the realism of the Founding Fathers about individual self-reliance and the waywardness of unpredictable events.

Resnick and Nerenberg do not make business a social or economic villain. Even in discussing antitrust actions, they put "unfair" business practices in the most impartial of quotation marks (p. 384). In this area, they are to be faulted chiefly for superficiality. This is not mere oversimplification brought about by the difficulty of explaining the subtleties of high finance to teenagers; it is once more a matter of simply serving up the most popular clichés of the moment, favorable on one side, unfavorable on the other, with no depth of interpretation.

It would take a perspicacious student indeed to come away from this book with an understanding of a market economy, either as a working mechanism in itself or in comparison with rival forms of production and distribution—this in spite of the authors' belief, expressed in the preface to the book, that the central domestic concerns of the American government are economic problems (a contention which in itself is interestingly debatable) (p. viii).

Among the subjects inadequately elucidated in the area of economic controls is wage- and price-fixing. There is almost nothing on the experience with controls during the Second World War, and there is no explanation of the negative effect of present-day rent controls.

Then too, there are some false dichotomies projected about what government regulation of business really does. To say "On one hand, some charge that the regulatory agencies are being used by members of the respective professions to keep out competitors, not to protect consumers. On the other hand, there are some businessmen who be-

lieve that buyers should not expect the government to protect them at all. They argue that under our capitalistic system, we should keep to the old rule of *caveat emptor*—let the buyer beware!" (p. 389) does not really get at the economic and social dilemmas involved in government regulation of business. It simply levels two sets of charges at business while pretending to state two sides of a controversy.

Meanwhile, the really dubious aspects of government regulation are inadequately explored. The growing areas of administrative law and proliferating regulations, made without recourse to the legislature, receive only perfunctory attention. Similarly, the new devices by which business interests centralize power—particularly multinational corporations and conglomerates—are barely touched upon.

Perhaps more important omissions in the field of economics have to do with government spending. "Some people think it costs too much" is about all the authors say about many government outlays of the most sweeping proportions. Granted the difficulty of explaining to the high school crowd deficit financing and the relationship of the national debt to the tax rate, there is an airy unreality about the treatment of money in this book that runs counter to the tradition of thrift united with pragmatism that was once at least thought to suffuse American management of money.

The sections of this book dealing with the relations of the United States with other countries express classic American values well. There are a few genuflections to the kind of liberal orthodoxy found in the sections about welfare, to be sure, but the greater weight goes to statements of moderate, humane, and realistic attitudes toward the American place in the world community.

Two examples of dubious thinking in relation to world politics are to be found in the authors' "Note to the Student," where it is said that "Finding ways to eliminate the sharp differences between the have and have-not nations would undoubtedly help prevent war" and that "Have-not nations are poor largely because they lack essential natural resources to make a living" (p. viii). Since both of these could be demolished with ease by the slightest recourse to the history books, they do little to validate the general soundness of what is to follow. The later sections, however, are more in line with reality and classic American values.

It would be hard to quarrel with "Like all other nations, the United States pursues its own national interest. As far as possible, our

methods are peaceful, though at times we have found it necessary to go to war. The goals of our foreign policy are to safeguard our own borders, to promote the economic welfare of our people, and to protect foreign governments whose stability [will] increase the possibility of global peace" (p. 520), or "We give military and economic assistance to weak and underdeveloped countries to help them resist being controlled by powerful nations. Although our help is sometimes hampered by inept methods, defenders of the foreign aid program believe that it helps make friends for this country" (p. 521).

Even the treatment of the United Nations maintains a tone nicely deferential to the hope of international cooperation in the interests of peace, yet open-eyed about the inherent limitations of the international organization. There is a corresponding moderation in mention of the major defense issues.

To be sure, the general assessment of "our place in the world" omits some important considerations and indulges in euphemism on several scores. The People's Republic of China, for example, is presented as demonstrating its good faith as a peace-loving government by joining the United Nations! Similarly, to speak of Soviet "allies" in eastern Europe is to gloss over a lot (p. 491).

The important omission, however, is an account of the way ideology fits into the picture. It is understandable that the authors, writing the book in the late 1960s, would want to stay as clear as possible of issues related to the Cold War, but the fact is that ideology *does* figure in the power equations of the world at any time. It may not have exactly the weight that it seemed to at the height of East-West tension, but it is a major consideration and should be described as such—particularly since it has contributed so much to the international significance of the United States since its founding.

How many countries around the world would be far different from the way they are if it were not for the inspiration of the United States to throw off colonial rule, establish constitutional government, start agricultural schools, and take any number of other actions that flow from our basic political philosophy! Similarly, the disadvantages of the United States in the world community today have as much to do with ideology as with anything else.

While the book gives a cursory comparison of our system and its chief rivals, it does not go into details. And among the farthest from adequate of its presentations are the ones having to do with

issues of free expression touching ideology. There is a one-sidedness in saying "On many college campuses today there are attempts to close the doors to Communist speakers. Segregationists would like to keep integrationists from voicing their ideas on public streets, and vice versa" (p. 84). That "vice versa" doesn't exactly give honest weight to the actual vice versas of the 1960s, when it was the ROTC recruiter who was hounded off the campus.

The issues raised by the phenomenon of Joseph McCarthy are also handled too gingerly in this book. A textbook in American government should speak out clearly on the right of a free society to establish rules that enable it to protect itself from overthrow and replacement by an unfree system. What the guarantees should be and how they should be matched to the freedoms of creative dissent can then be argued over a wide spectrum of differing views.

Other issues on which Resnick and Nerenberg can be charged with unnecessary pussyfooting are the separation of church and state and religious freedom. The idea of irreligion or secularism as state-endorsed dogma is not discussed.

In the area of politics, the book is somewhat inadequate in asserting the contemporary values of a severely challenged federalism. Its coverage of the one-man-one-vote issue also lacks incisiveness about the nature of representation in the American system.

Finally, the book could be stronger and clearer about how the two roles of leader and agent of public opinion should and do mesh in American political figures.

To sum up, this book has gaps and falls down in defense of some American values but, in general, does reasonably well—better, for example, than the generality of the communications media.

Response / by the Authors of *American Government in Action*

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The authors of* American Government in Action *were invited to respond to the appraisals of their textbook. A response was written by Miriam Resnick and sent to Lillian Nerenberg, who deleted certain statements from it and added others of her own. Unable to agree on a common statement, the two authors left to the editor the task of presenting their views. To do justice to the ideas of each author, we have printed a composite response which includes the text approved by both as well as the passages unique to one or the other. The latter are clearly identified by name and indentation.*

ANYONE WHO WOULD ANALYZE AND CRITICIZE a textbook should—to be fair—consider the audience for which the book is intended and the normal constraints of publishing such a book. Many of the complaints set down by Crutcher, Kirkpatrick, and Novak fall under the weight of these built-in limitations on *American Government in Action.*

We were addressing, at best, a half-educated populace. The prospective audience was scattered throughout the length and breadth of our fifty states. They were products of literally thousands of elementary educational systems of widely varying [*Resnick:* but probably more often low] excellence. Our mission was to catch the attention and interest of these motley thousands, but only after running a truly formidable gauntlet: first, reviewers of varying philosophies from school districts all over the country; second, experienced and tough-minded editors on the publisher's staff; finally, textbook selection committees with astonishingly different points of view.

It goes without saying that we did not satisfy everybody. But we were bound to try, in order to justify the three years of labor which went into the writing and the publisher's considerable expense of producing a hardcover volume of well over 600 pages [*Resnick:* selling

for a not inconsiderable price per copy]. (The choice of our book for analysis by Crutcher, Kirkpatrick, and Novak, based on the fact that it is one of the most widely used in the country, attests to our relative success in meeting the basic textbook criteria.)

Resnick: None of this means that for crass commercial reasons we prostituted ourselves by writing what we did not believe. What it does mean is that we were held all the more rigorously to a worthwhile ideal: to be fair and evenhanded; to give all sides of all questions within the limits of our knowledge and ability; to refrain from damning the American system to which we are both devoted, and to consciously promote the ideals on which our democratic government rests (no matter how far we may have strayed over the past 200 years).

We were also bound to write this book in such a way that it would be interesting, so as to catch the attention of the elusive student audience; easy to understand, to get around the low level of reading ability of many American high school students; relevant (horrid, ubiquitous word) to the readers' lives; thought-provoking, to prepare these citizens-to-be for the hard choices which would face them as adult citizens and voters.

Nerenberg: One of the critics commends our "positive" approach; another criticizes us for being too optimistic. We do believe that an optimistic approach increases citizen efficacy. Furthermore, we do not want students to be frustrated by negatives and insoluble situations or to be apathetic to investigating alternative solutions before we can even explain the process of government to them. We provided opportunities for teachers to encourage discussion and for students to play roles so that the onus of being the dissenter does not fall on them personally. The text invites open-ended problem solving.

Crutcher accuses us of "baby-talk broad-mindedness," a nasty locution but probably fair enough. We take it as a compliment. It was necessary and we are glad we succeeded.

Resnick: Another publishing constraint is one we thoroughly deplore and have tried without success to overcome. Merrill, like many other small publishing companies, was acquired by a conglomerate shortly after our book was first published. The new owner is Bell & Howell. Conglomerates, like most large businesses, live by the profit motive alone. Ergo, they milk their assets

dry. We have tried repeatedly to interest the publishers in a thorough and much-needed revision and updating. No luck. *American Government in Action* is still selling well, even though the book has *never* been really revised since we finished writing it ten years ago.

True, the version now circulating purports to be a second edition and is dated 1973. Neither of us whose names appear on the book had anything to do with this "revision," which came to us as a fait accompli by some anonymous person or persons on the Merrill staff.* They didn't do much.

They updated the illustrations (including the one of Daniel Ellsberg to which two of the reviewers object so much), added new facts here and there, and transformed the cover by means of a patriotic red-white-and-blue color scheme.

We think that the practice of selling (and buying) out-of-date textbooks for courses in government is a fraud on the students. Worse still, to our certain knowledge sizable school districts are still using the *first* edition. Expense, of course, is the reason. These far-from-wealthy districts are determined to amortize their initial investment in a textbook, as long as the pages are still legible. So both editions are still in use, even though the "revised" 1973 version is also out of date in 1977.

Many of the criticisms from Crutcher, Kirkpatrick, and Novak have to do with the failure of the book to include information and points of view which had not appeared in the mid sixties, when the book was actually written.

Resnick: For example: Jerry Brown, governor of California, would have been Jerry Who? in those days. (Incidentally, Brown is called a liberal by one of our critics. As Californians, we dispute that. He is a strange, strange creature, about 110 percent politician but not a liberal by our standards.)

We are faulted for an out-of-date analysis of crime and punishment. But we set down the conventional wisdom of the times in which we wrote, much of it from reports and recommendations by respected authorities. Were we writing those sections today, we would add new causes lately adduced for crime, new material on the plight of the victims of crime, new ideas on prisons, punishment, and rehabilitation, all of which have surfaced since the book was written.

*Another revision by the publisher is scheduled for 1979.

Another criticism is of our failure to note the trend back to the cities from the suburbs. That was not happening in the mid sixties. We wish we had had the prophetic wisdom to foresee it.

In fact, the three critics failed to point out other areas in our book which are also behind the times. They exist. We regret it, but can do nothing about it until a real revision is authorized.

We can only hope that the teachers who use our textbook in their classes are supplementing what their pupils read with new ideas and new information. If teachers are doing their jobs, all is well, out-of-date textbooks notwithstanding. Indeed, textbooks at best should be an adjunct to good teaching, not the whole show. Thus, if the facts in a book have become outdated, or if an author's prejudices somehow become evident, a good teacher can and should set the class straight.

Resnick: It is our fervent wish that something like this is happening in civics classes. If it is not, it should be.

Nerenberg: Perhaps these reviewers did not expect writers to place more emphasis on women in politics and government. Some groups took exception.[2] We did not intend to "prefer" big government or to slight women; we were describing government as it is. Women in the mid sixties were not very visible in decision-making roles, although the clamor on their behalf was beginning. Ecology then was known as environment and Negroes were just turning into blacks. If we were writing today, the emphasis would be different, both because of the presence of more women participants and because our sensitivity to the problem has been heightened. Similarly, were we writing today, our coverage would include more on the dangers of big government, with reference, for example, to an article by Jethro K. Lieberman entitled "How Much Government?" [3]

At least one critic seems to feel that people are born with original sin. Assuming such to be the case, does society tab them in their preschool years and quarantine them early on? It seems that many who are arrested never serve sentences. Shall we offer bonuses to policemen in accordance with the rate of convictions resulting from their arrests? Of course crime has increased in the mid sixties, and the number of women offenders has increased. Will we be faulted if we quote from a study directed by Ruth M. Glick for the National

Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice in which the assertion by the media that the apparent sharp increase in the female arrest rate is "the dark side of women's liberation" is questioned?[3] Will we be criticized for questioning whether major and minor social upheavals—the war in Vietnam, the recession, Watergate, drugs, and the like—may have contributed to the rise in female crime? Shall we use headlines from the media, such as ARRESTS OF WOMEN FOR BURGLARY HAVE INCREASED 238 PERCENT IN 1973, or shall we analyze data and point out that the percentage increase is inversely related to the size of the base figure—that is, women were arrested for 3,945 more burglaries in the same period, while for burglaries by men, which increased 100 percent, there were 53,512 more arrests?[4]

Since there is so much material to present, we probably would assume that teachers and students were cognizant of newspaper headlines and direct them toward less familiar sources of ideas. That is one of the reasons for our having quoted from the President's Commission on Law Enforcement concerning white-collar crime—which reviewers faulted, even though the report stated "most important, the public tends to be indifferent."[5] That report and the report of the President's National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) were central to a discussion of crime when we wrote the book. Writing now, we would have other reports to examine and question. We do not have the answers, nor do the reviewers.

The reviewers are concerned about the juxtaposition between crime and environment. We do not claim that all people would be angels if they had all their wants satisfied (or that all wants could be satisfied). But why does a relationship between crime and poverty seem so shocking? Of course the poor are also victims, and perhaps the presentation was not fully balanced.

In the report of a conference on crime sponsored by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions,[6] there are a number of differing views on the problem of crime, enough different approaches to satisfy all of us, from judges, senators, professors of law, and directors of corporations. The range of opinions is as wide as ever, and all of them can be defended from an ethical and moral point of view. We would try to

present a well-balanced summary, but with the pressure of space allowed it is quite likely that again, not everyone would be happy.

Speaking of bias, Novak in particular disapprovingly dubs us liberals and charges us with giving our supposed prejudices scandalous rein throughout the book. He sees us also as pro-big government, anti-religion, anti-morality, anti-business, pro-union, pro-government regulation, pro-criminals, and anti-ordinary people—even pro-Daniel Ellsberg because the man's picture makes him out to be so handsome. Taking the role of psychoanalyst, Novak has put us on his couch and made an unwarranted diagnosis. Of course we both have private prejudices (just as Mr. Novak does), but we made a scrupulous effort to hide them from our readers, if only because no one would buy the book if we didn't. What really enrages Novak, we suggest, is that we failed to enunciate *his* particular prejudiced points of view.

Resnick: This is a frequent reaction of passionate partisans to any evenhanded exposition.

Nerenberg: Liberals, as Dexter Perkins conveys in *The American Way,*[1] are more optimistic about man's potential to improve, more trusting, more apt to risk change. In some areas the authors are liberal, although in others quite conservative and not in agreement with each other on certain value judgments. We do—perhaps inadequately—point to questions of conscience and morality and the relationship of morals and ethics to law and law enforcement. And we do include arguments against welfare, as well as for welfare (p. 446).

Indeed, two of the three critics reveal their own biases in the titles they have appended to their reviews. Novak calls his "American Government Glamorized." He doesn't like government and doesn't want anyone else to like government. Thus he damns us for carrying out our clearly stated purpose, set out in the first sentence of the preface: to make "the study of government become interesting, vital, and challenging to young Americans who, within a few years, will be making this nation's basic democratic decisions."

Nerenberg: Is it too much to hope that some of the students we have introduced to the processes of government will use what they learned to define "government" as something they want less of, as their experiences increase, new ideas germinate, the milieu changes, and the media "gatekeepers" open columns to other

alternatives? We recommend sources for a wide variety of viewpoints in our Bibliography: *The New Republic* to *National Review, Christian Science Monitor* to *Wall Street Journal,* all of which and more we conscientiously monitored during our writing efforts, and many of which we still compulsively read, clip, and file for our own teaching efforts.

The writer of textbooks at the high school level does not have the luxury of writing a novel thesis. The sources must be fairly well established and the ideas must be in the mainstream. Were our time frame the mid seventies, the outer limits and our perspectives would be different. In that sense, your critiques will be valuable to other writers, for as the climate changes, the norms change. As for the eternal verities, they will take care of themselves.

We also announced that we would "tell what government actually does to affect the lives of real people." That we have realized these aims troubles Mr. Novak, who would rather see us attack government.

Nerenberg: He feels we were not critical enough. There are a number of places in the text where criticism is invited and encouraged: at page 181, should government have a right to become involved in automobile safety and water pollution; at page 183, asking for a list of activities not controlled by government; at page 494, the freedom to disagree with leaders; and at page 550, importance of citizens to view changing policies of government.

Furthermore, Novak may not realize how difficult it is to criticize institutions in a high school text. Our editor did not want us to point out that a particular government information film was manipulative of public opinion; and we received unfavorable comment on our negative portrayal of certain state governments. This is not mentioned simply to dilute the criticism of this book, but to point out some of the constraints that writers of high school textbooks face.

Kirkpatrick calls our book "The Trivialization of Government." She is horrified by our analogy that Americans are 200 million customers of government. This, she complains, is a "Dick and Jane" approach. She is at least partly correct. We did strain to make a complex subject understandable to our immature audience. If our similes and metaphors are too bland for the sophisticated palate of a

Kirkpatrick, they may all the same be palatable to Dick and Jane themselves. At least this milkshake of a book is not the pot or alcohol to which more biased texts might be compared. *American Government in Action,* we hope, provides our readers with essential intellectual calories and vitamins.

Kirkpatrick herself is hungry for the whole meal all in one chapter. She complains that in our discussion of democracy we omit mention of "political competition, of periodic elections, of opposition, or of free speech, press, and assembly." She fails to note that these topics are indeed treated, at length, but in a later chapter.

Kirkpatrick is not above trivia herself. The answer key (for which we were not responsible and which is not provided to students in any case) is faulted in several minor respects. The very title of a chapter, "The Right to Be Yourself," is criticized as if we intended to imply that these words are literally part of the Bill of Rights. She is one who also assailed the photograph of Daniel Ellsberg. Why is the very mention of the man anathema to Kirkpatrick and Novak? He did figure in a very important controversy during the dark days of the Nixon administration.

Another Kirkpatrick criticism is that we selected the wrong victims of intolerance. Better, she says, to have used William Shockley or *Hustler* magazine, rather than Communists, Nazis, blacks, pacifists, Japanese, who are "conventional" and "outdated." When we wrote the book, no one had heard of *Hustler* nor, it seems to us, of Shockley. But, alas, blacks are still victims in 1977, although the details of their victimization may be different right now. As for the other groups, the wounds have not yet healed. In fact, there is a nasty problem concerning free speech by an avowed Nazi confronting the people of San Jose, California, even as this is being written—October 1977.

Criticisms by all three reviewers charge us with superficiality in our treatment of various important topics. For instance, Crutcher calls on us to deliver far more than an elementary political science textbook can or should provide. She wants more history about other nations which have fallen into temporary anarchy—but this is not a history book. She would have us delve in depth into questions of economics—but this is also not an economics text. She would like a dissertation on the erosion of popular morals—but our book is neither a religious tract nor a sociological treatise. And she asks, too, for far more information on the ideologies of the nations of the world, a complicated

matter of political philosophy which is also beyond the scope of an elementary text on *American* government.

Crutcher cannot resist, like Novak, an impulse to ask us to come down on her own side of certain controversial questions. She demands much more on the McCarthy phenomenon, in connection with which we "should speak out clearly on the right of a free society to establish rules that enable it to protect itself from overthrow and replacement by an unfree system." If we read this right, Crutcher is asking us to defend Joseph McCarthy. Never! Evenhandedness, even on the part of a couple of textbook authors, has its limits.

In general, however, we must say that Crutcher's analysis of our book is more fair than unfair, even though some of her criticisms are of omissions which were inevitable, given the original date of publication of our book.

Nerenberg: It is our attempt to be evenhanded that led to Crutcher's criticizing our too frequent use of "sometimes," "some people say," and "on the other hand."

Of the three critics, it is Novak who appears most enraged by *American Government in Action.* He does not like liberals, he imagines that we two authors are liberals, and he accuses us of bootlegging the liberal point of view while pretending to give both sides of every question. He says we invariably set down the liberal arguments last and that we state them far more cogently than the conservative arguments.

Search as we may throughout the text, we cannot find such a bias. We suggest that it is all in Mr. Novak's head. We are accused of touting big government when we are merely describing what is, not what ought to be. In fact, the book is peppered with questions for the student to answer, which are intended to promote hard thinking on basic issues, such as how much government should do for us, how much government is spending, and whether or not it should spend so much, and serious questions concerning civil rights, taxation, government control of business, and many, many other issues. When Novak writes: "Seldom do they warn of the clumsiness, inefficiency, tyranny, arrogance, or danger to liberal values of government," he is simply wrong. The issues are raised repeatedly, particularly in the "Play a Part in Democracy" features and in the questions at the end of the chapters.

Nerenberg: As many a teacher will testify, the same lecture to the

same group will evoke comments from half the class that the professor is a Democrat, and the other half will insist that he is obviously a Republican. Selective reading may be akin to selective hearing.

In one place, where Novak does admit that we raise questions, he says we raise them pro forma because we don't give *his* answers. We don't prescribe ours, either. Our job was to present the facts and the alternatives and let these students think for themselves, like genuine democrats (small *d*, please).

Resnick: Shall we accuse Novak himself of being anti-democracy? It is tempting, but we don't want to psychoanalyze him in absentia, any more than we want to be psychoanalyzed ourselves in such summary fashion.

In another place Novak complains that we present government as the biggest and best game in town. Alas, we were merely describing a present reality. Our mission, after all, was to write about American government.

"There is no sense that moral seriousness and the hard work of self-improvement is required," writes Novak. We leave this kind of exhortation to the home and the church. It has no place in a government textbook. Novak's critique is shot through with similar yearnings for moralistic teaching.

Resnick: "Ees not my yob," we reply, in the words of a popular joke.

Novak also presses for a defense of a laissez-faire economy. Again, we think he is entirely out of order. It is our impression (not that we are professional economists) that the laissez-faire economy never really existed.

Resnick: More important, it is again "not my yob" to propagate economic principles, whether worthy or dubious, in an elementary textbook on American government.

Nerenberg: We refer him to *Government and the Economy,* by Lloyd D. Musolf,[8] in which the author points out that laissez-faire was never consistently applied to the American economy. Promotional and regulatory activities by government in America predate the Constitution. As a person concerned with morality and laissez-faire, to what lengths does he go? Was the attitude of British officials during the Irish potato famine moral? Yet it is a classic example of laissez-faire! It has just come to our attention that Senator George McGovern wrote the introduc-

tion to the Musolf book. One can hope that this of itself will not disqualify the source. More important, it is again not our purpose to propagate economic principles, whether worthy or dubious, in an elementary textbook on American government.

What annoys most of all is that Novak accuses us of peddling uncritical ideology. All this is in the eye of the beholder. Our mirror gives us quite another image. We think we have been extraordinarily neutral, even to the extent of asking numerous questions and peddling readings (see the back of the book) which cover sides of the questions with which we ourselves (privately!) disagree.

To return to Kirkpatrick, she devotes many paragraphs to our shortcomings in the realm of political philosophy. We made an effort to boil down this material, in an appropriate chapter, in such a way that our naive readers would derive at least a general idea of the ideological underpinnings of our American form of government. The material was worked and reworked, with the aid of well-informed reviewers, to get it right. The problem really is that it may be impossible to make both a simple and a totally accurate translation of such complicated stuff. To do more than we have done would have been totally inappropriate, considering the level of the audience for the book. When they reach college, if they do, they will have an opportunity to explore these important ideas [*Resnick:* in the depth they deserve].

Kirkpatrick doesn't like our analyses of the nature of totalitarian governments. But we don't agree with her version either. Again, however, the subject would require intensive discussion to bring out the varying characteristics of all the foreign governments she has listed. But ours is a book on *American* government. A course in comparative government on the college level would do a much better job with this topic. We are limited to brief generalizations, almost an aside.

Kirkpatrick asserts that we have failed to link individual rights to the obligations of citizenship. Here she is simply wrong.

Resnick: See page 62, for example, only one of many, many places where we have clamored (maybe even ad nauseam) for the student to recognize the duties and obligations of citizenship in a democracy.

Nerenberg: On page 62, for example:

> ***Also felt, but not really seen, are the influence of our long tradition of freedom and our belief in the dignity and worth of***

> *every individual. Throughout our history many men and women have willingly died to defend these values.*

And on page 119:

> *In a democracy, the ballot, not the bullet, is a basic weapon of the people. Because it is you, when you reach voting age, who will wield that weapon, you may well blame yourself for poor government or congratulate yourself for good government. But voting is not all there is for you to do as an adult member of the political community.*

Kirkpatrick's charge that we attributed crime to willful automobiles which permit themselves to be stolen or wrecked is a cheap shot. Our intention was to put crime into some sort of perspective. It happens to be true that raw statistics on crime mask the true components of crime. Not all crime is murder. The seriousness of crimes varies tremendously. It is only fair to point this out. It is also fair to mention white-collar crime and its cost, even though Crutcher calls these statements "blatantly prejudicial." Why? Are big business miscreants to be totally absolved as was (say) Richard Nixon? Talk about one-sidedness!

It is Crutcher who faults us for leaving out mention of "the erosion of moral authority." We are as sensitive to morals as she is, but must note once more that we are writing a political science book, not the Bible or a sociology text.

Nerenberg: Yet we do refer to morals and personal ethics:

> *People who gamble illegally, patronize houses of prostitution, or offer bribes to policemen are guilty along with the people they encourage to break the law.*
>
> *These problems of law and law enforcement are questions of morality and personal ethics as well as of political science* (p. 323–324).

Perhaps the complaints of all three critics can be summed up in Kirkpatrick's next to last sentence: "When top-ranking political scientists write textbooks for high schools, there will be top-flight textbooks." The fact is that top-ranking political scientists are (a generalization, of course) just plain incapable of writing textbooks for the high school crowd. It takes a special kind of expertise to transform complicated concepts into plain simple English. This talent is simply beyond most savants. In contrast, one of us two authors has spent all her many professional years perfecting such a talent. Without undue

modesty, we add that her work has been rewarded with considerable success. Accuracy is essential in a textbook, certainly, but if the facts are not communicated in such a way that they are read and understood, the effort has been in vain. The wide sale of *American Government in Action* all over the country seems to us to say that we are being read, understood, and, we hope, contributing to good citizenship in these United States.

Nerenberg: In "What's Wrong with Political Science," [9] Michael Nelson comments that people are more intimately affected by government than ever before and *sense, and resent, the weight of bureaucratic regulation bearing down heavily on them in their personal lives. They still believe in the basic goodness of the system, but feel powerless to make unelected bureaucrats and distant legislators respond to their needs instead of the other way around. The pollyanna-like civics training most people got in school, which probobly did not even mention bureaucracy, political parties, pressure groups, mass media, and other components of real-world politics, left them no better informed* (p. 20).

Our text mentions bureaucracy, political parties, pressure groups, mass media (thirteen references in the index), and other components of politics in the real world. Our aim has been "to teach [students] how their system really works, how they can make it work for them," or how they can "fend for themselves against their grossly overgrown government," if that is their desire.

To summarize, there are strictures on publishing: Publishers adhere to their views of the middle of the road. School boards are as varied as they are numerous, and each state has its own views and imposes them on its educational system. A good textbook is one that is adaptable to these requirements, as well as to the interests of students. Finally the teaching of citizenship depends on the teacher, the manner of conducting the class, the administration of the school, and the spirit of the school—all of which determine the effectiveness with which the book is used.

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Los Gatos, California
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1. Jennifer S. Macleod and Sandra T. Silverman, *"You Won't Do": What Textbooks on U.S. Government Teach High School Girls* (Pittsburgh: KNOW, Inc., 1973), pp. 23, 26, 42, and elsewhere throughout the book, wherein the authors are credited with an inadequate, though conscientious, effort to include women.

2. *The Center Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 3 (May/June 1977), pp. 63–77.

3. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, *National Study of Women's Correctional Programs*, by Ruth M. Glick and Virginia V. Neto (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. xxiii.

4. Ibid., p. 5.

5. *American Government in Action*, p. 324; see also "The Trouble with Crime Statistics," ibid., p. 312.

6. "Crime and the American Society," *The Center Magazine*, vol. 10, no. 4 (July/August 1977), pp. 16–47.

7. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957.

8. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1965.

9. *Washington Monthly*, vol. 9, no. 7 (September 1977), pp. 12–20.

Michael Novak, Ledden-Watson Distinguished Professor of Religion at Syracuse University, holds degrees from the Gregorian University in Rome and Harvard University. He writes a syndicated newspaper column on American culture, "Illusions and Realities." His books include two novels and several philosophical works dealing with religion, politics, and society, including *Choosing Our King* (1974) and *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972). He has written for *Harper's, Commentary, Commonweal, Saturday Review, The New Republic, Christianity and Crisis, Journal of of Ecumenical Studies,* and other periodicals.

Jeane Kirkpatrick is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, on leave from Georgetown University, where she is a professor of political science. She received her A.B. from Barnard College and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. She has been active in the Democratic Party at the national level and served on the Credentials and Platform committees at its 1976 Convention. She is the author of three books—*The New Presidential Elite* (1976), *Political Woman* (1974), and *Leader and Vanguard in Mass Society* (1971) and has written for *Commentary, The New Republic, The New Leader,* and *The British Journal of Political Science.*

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